

Southern League.

SOUTHAMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at Southampton on Saturday.
Result:—

Luton nil.
Southampton nil.

The teams were constituted as under:—

Luton—Jarvis; Chapman and Wightman; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and R. M. Hawkes; Brown, Quinn, Johnson, Moody, and Stansfield.

Southampton — Goodchild; Eastham and Glover; Johnston, Monk, and Trueman; Smith, Jefferies, Jepp, Wheeler, and Blake.

Referee, Mr. F. R. Viveash (London).

Since the opening match of the season, Southampton have had a varied experience; indeed, at the end of October they were absolutely at the bottom of the table, which was something fresh for them. Then a regular reshuffling of the team took place, and for a long period they never lost a match, and went near to the top sawyers. During the holiday games, however, they failed to keep this up, and Millwall by an early goal carried away a couple of points the Saturday previous to Luton's visit, while Southampton also lost at Park Royal.

Like the majority of clubs, the extra matches played recently have told their tale, and Southampton were handicapped by the absence of at least five players who have been instrumental in bringing about the material improvement in results indicated above. Beaumont, who had recently been engaged, was suffering from an injured toe, while A. C. Brown, another ex-Pompey player, has a bad leg, and H. Brown is nursing an injured ankle. Soon after the season started the Saints discovered a centre-forward in Kimpton, who hails from the Watford district; indeed, he played in one of the trial matches at Watford, but was not signed up. He also was absent on Saturday. Therefore the only one of the five absentees who has previously played as a Saint against Luton was Robertson, who was hobbling about with a stick and is not expected to turn out again for a month or six weeks.

The newcomers out on Saturday were Goodchild, Monk, Smith, and Wheeler. Goodchild was preferred to Burrows, who seems to have gone right off, although he was playing for the second string in the Hampshire League. Monk comes from Salisbury City, and is quite established at centre-half. Smith and Wheeler are local reserves who were playing in the Southern League for the first time.

The Saints started the game, Bob Hawkes having won the toss, and were soon observed well in the Luton goal area. Blake was the first to get away, and his centre was headed towards the goal by Jepp, but Jarvis saved by giving a corner, which was cleared. The ball was very soon brought back again, and Trueman tried a good drive, which Jarvis stopped with his knees, but the ball rolled out of his reach. Jefferies charged him, but failed to gain the ball, and Wightman booted it well over the goal at the expense of another corner. At this stage the pressure was very hot on the Luton defence, and for some time the Luton forwards took little part in the exchanges; but eventually the venue was altered by a nice effort from Brown, who wound up with a fine centre, only to see Eastham kick it away down the field.

Having found his feet, Brown was continually getting through, and Goodchild was rather fortunate to get at one particularly smart middle from the Luton right wing, as both Moody and Johnson were well on the spot. Most of the attacking came from this side of the field, and Quinn appeared to be going through in fine style when he was brought down quite a couple of yards inside the penalty area, and a penalty kick seemed inevitable. The referee, however, very carefully placed the ball a few inches outside the mark, and the free kick was charged down, and a return attempt was cleared by Eastham. Undoubtedly the referee made a blunder which had a big influence on the result, for at this point Luton were having most of the game, and it only needed a goal to give them confidence.

Just afterwards another fine cross centre from Brown had only to be touched to find the net, but it missed Johnson's head by inches, and Stansfield was too near the line to shoot when the ball fell at his toe. He tried to push the ball back to the goal-mouth, but did not send it far enough, and Eastham once more cleared his lines with a huge kick. At length the Saints had another look-in, but it was evident Jepp was not an ideal centre, and several promising passes went begging. Jefferies initiated an exciting incident when he dashed away and pushed the ball ahead for Smith to gather, but the winger was really too far down the field, and Jarvis running out got the ball all right, but he booted it hard on to Smith, who was running in. For the moment it appeared that nothing could save the Luton goal from falling, as no one was within yards of the uprights, but the ball travelled a yard or so wide and went for a goal kick. It was a near thing indeed, and rather fortunate for Luton.

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When the teams lined up for the second half it was noticed that Monk and Jepp had exchanged positions. Luton were first to press, Goodchild saving well from Stansfield, and later on only the fact of Eastham working to place the Luton left wing offside prevented an almost certain goal. These tactics were quite a feature of the game, and Johnson time after time was pulled up for the same reason. Smith drew Wightman and passed the ball well forward to where Monk was standing, and the latter raced down the centre with the ball at his toe with no one but Jarvis in front. Of course, he was well offside, but the referee made no sign, and Monk took the ball right into the mouth of goal. There seemed no possible chance of preventing the centre scoring, but Jarvis dropped down and just saved the ball going through, Monk actually running over the outstretched form of the Luton goalkeeper, who managed to scramble the ball away. When Jarvis got up it was found he had been rather badly kicked on the arm, and it took Trainer Lawson a few minutes to get him right again, but he did not come off, and stuck to his post to the finish. It was a daring save, but should never have happened, for Monk ought to have been pulled up immediately he started to run.

The game slowed down a deal, and the home forwards practically faded out of the picture, it being a duel between the Luton attack and one of the finest defences of the League, and the defence came out best in the exchanges. There was one more very dangerous burst-away on the part of Monk. This time he did not take the ball so far up the field, letting drive with tremendous force with a rising shot, but Jarvis coolly turned this over the bar for a corner. At the opposite end of the field Luton forced several corners, but could not overcome the attentions of Eastham and Co., and Goodchild keeping a clever goal, maintained a clean sheet to the end. The light, which was never good, was now very bad, a mist hanging over the low-lying pitch, and it was almost impossible to follow the game on the far side of the field. Anyhow, the final incident was a corner kick taken by Brown, which Goodchild caught almost simultaneously with the sound of the whistle.

On the run of the play Luton should have scored a win, but the Saints' defence was in excellent form, especially Eastham, who was the best man on the field. In the opinion of the local public, he is easily the best right back in the Southern League on present form. Glover also played well, but suffered through playing by the side of Eastham. The home halves played well at times, Trueman being most in evidence. As was to be expected by the many changes, the front rank suffered in combination, and the two regular members were about the best of the line, although Smith at outside-right was far from a failure.

The Luton forwards were a better line in midfield, but they failed to force the game at close quarters, or a different result would have been realised. Brown was the pick of the bunch in getting through, and his centres were always dangerous. Of the rest, Moody played cleverly and gave his partner numerous opportunities, but, as before mentioned, Eastham proved a rare hurdle, and Stansfield did not often get the better of a personal duel with the Southampton right back.

Bob Hawkes is always a favourite at the Doll, and he is now playing finely, and notwithstanding that he had to hold Jefferies in check, he was the best half-back on the field, although Bushell and Fred Hawkes also contributed their share of work. Wightman was the more prominent of the backs, his weight coming in very useful at times. After the opening minutes Jarvis made no mistake, unless it was in not clearing when he ran out of goal, but he made ample amends by the two magnificent saves from Monk in the second half, and has proved an able substitute for Naisby in the Christmas matches.

The most noteworthy performance in the Southern League matches on Saturday was that of Swindon, who visited Crystal Palace, and after being two goals down at the end of the first four minutes, ran out winners by 5 goals to 2. West Ham won at Southend by 6 goals to nil, and at New Brompton, Millwall were unexpectedly victorious by 2 goals to nil. The other results were:—Plymouth 4, Portsmouth 0; Coventry 3, Queen's Park Rangers 2; Brentford 3, Exeter 1; Leyton 1, Brighton 1; Norwich 1, Bristol Rovers 0; Watford 2, Northampton.

The following is the League table up to and including Saturday's matches:—

								Goals		
	Plyd.	Won	Lost	Drn.	For	Agst	Pts			
Swindon Town ...	20	14	3	3	48	16	31			
West Ham	21	11	5	5	38	20	27			
Crystal Palace ...	22	10	5	7	26	28	27			
Brighton & H ve	20	11	5	4	34	19	27			
Brentford	20	11	5	4	28	19	26			
Northampton.....	20	9	4	7	26	17	25			
Leyton	20	9	7	4	33	28	22			
Norwich City	20	9	8	3	26	25	21			
Coventry City ...	20	9	9	2	41	29	20			
Southampton.....	20	8	8	4	26	16	20			
Exeter City	20	7	9	4	22	21	18			
Luton	19	6	8	5	24	25	17			
Milwall Athletic	20	7	10	3	20	29	17			
Queen's Park R...	21	6	10	5	20	29	17			
Portsmouth	21	6	10	5	20	31	17			
Plymouth Argyle	20	6	10	4	17	34	16			
Watford	18	5	9	4	21	31	14			
New Brompton	19	6	11	2	16	34	14			
Southend United	19	4	10	6	24	41	13			
Bristol Rovers ...	20	4	12	4	17	31	12			

On Saturday next, Luton are at home to Southend United, and should certainly be good value for a couple of points, though unless they play the open game instead of fiddling about with the ball so much, there may be a disappointment in store. The kick-off is fixed for 2.30, and the team will be at full strength, with Naisby and Smith in their usual places, but Johnson will appear at outside-left in place of Stansfield.

Stansfield has not done very well for some time, and it is all because he will persist in trying to beat somebody before parting with the ball. In fact, with about two exceptions, this has been the great weakness of the forwards. They did so well at the beginning of the season that they have since developed a habit of trying to do impossible things, and naturally, it doesn't come off. If they will only be content to play the right game, which they can do as well as any forwards in the League, they will go a long way yet, and may bring off a surprise at Northampton.

The Red Cross Band will be in attendance on Saturday, but the collection, at half-time, will be in aid of the Bolton Colliery Disaster Fund. Anyone willing to assist in making the collection, should give in his name at the directors' room before the match.

Reserved and numbered tickets for the Cup-tie at Northampton on Jan. 14th can be obtained at Mr. W. A. Sale's, George-street, Luton, up to the evening of Wednesday, the 11th, after which they can only be procured by direct application to H. Chapman, County Ground, Northampton. Price, 3s. and 2s. 6d., including admission to the ground.